HISTORY OF THE ORIGINAL KU KLUX KLAN

Author unknown

When an American has been born who can write an impartial history of the ten years of our country immediately succeeding Appomattox, and deal fairly with the opposing factions in the bitter and frequently bloody after-struggle, he will find nothing so remarkable and mysterious as the purposes and history of "The Invisible Empire," more commonly known as the "Ku Klux Klan." It sprang into being almost in a night; it spread with inconceivable rapidity, until its "dens" largely dominated the States of Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and parts of Arkansas and Louisiana. It defied State and national authority (as they then existed), and under the very nose of the army of the United States it sent forth 100,000 armed men to do its bidding, passed laws without Legislatures, tried men without courts, and inflicted penalties, sometimes capital ones, without benefit of clergy; it was the most thoroughly organized, extensive, and effective vigilance committee the world has ever seen; or is likely to see; its every act was in defiance of the established order and the spirit and letter of our institutions, and yet I am thoroughly convinced that, among conditions as they existed in the States referred to between 1866 and 1872, scarcely a man in this assembly would have been other than a Ku Klux or a Ku Klux sympathizer. I do not mean that anyone present could for an instant tolerate or excuse many acts of cruelty and oppression committed by "The Invisible Empire," or the still larger number committed in its name by its enemies and reckless and malicious individuals, who had no real connection with the movement; I do not mean that the original design of the organization, treated as an academic question, could meet with the approval of right-minded men; but an individual can be properly judged only in the light of surroundings and the conditions under which he acts; applying this standard, *the Ku Klux movement assumes the dignity of a revolution, the protest of a proud and despairing race against conditions not to be endured; not a movement of weaklings or theorists, but of desperate men, challenging fate, and swearing that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness should be theirs and their children's at any cost.*

Not all authorities have agreed on what constitutes the right of revolution; it is stated by one that:

> "The right of revolution is the inherent right of a people to cast out their rulers, change their polity, or effect radical reforms in their system of government or institutions, by force or a general uprising, when the legal and constitutional methods of making such changes have proved inadequate, or are so obstructed as to be unavailable." *(Black's Constitutional Law, 2nd Ed., p.11.)*

Another says:

> "The general duty of obedience to the laws results from the protection they afford to the lives and property of the citizens and subjects; but when a civil government fails to afford that protection, and obstinately persists in a course injurious to the people, and when the probable evils accompanying the change are not greater than the blessings to be obtained by it, revolution becomes a duty as well as a right." *(Sir Sherston Baker)*

Still a third says:

> "When a long train of abuses and usurpation's, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under an absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their security." *(Halleck on International Law.)*

It has been contended by some that the right of revolution exists in instances where there is a reasonable probability of its being successfully asserted, and it may be said that a revolution is a rebellion which succeeds, while a rebellion is a revolution which fails; measured by any of these rules, the Ku Klux movement must be set down as a revolution, in that it accomplished certain results when all other measurers had failed.

The author of this paper was born during the war and raised on a plantation in Monroe County, Mississippi, near the Tombigbee River; it was a section devoted to cotton raising, the Negroes outnumbered the whites about four or five to one, and no portion of the South suffered more from the horrors of reconstruction or responded more militantly to the call of "The Invisible Empire."

As a child the writer has spent many a winter's evening in the Negro quarter listening to the weird stories of phantom horses and gigantic riders who nightly kept the countryside in fear, of ghostly visitors whose grinning skulls were carried under their arms and whose skeleton hands were offered in salutation, and of how each night they came from the graves of Shiloh and Vicksburg to ride again and warn the wandering Negro to stay by his own fireside and not tempt Providence by nocturnal meetings.

As the years rolled by the child gradually learned who the riders were, and why they rode; he came to know that perhaps all the adult male members of his own family had been Ku Klux, and in writing and by word of mouth received from survivors a clearer insight into what has never been half understood at the North and not fully at the South. In his search for the truth the writer has not hesitated in appropriating from several excellent articles on the subject important facts and figures; an article written by D.L. Wilson, which appeared in the July *Century* for 1884, entitled "The Ku Klux Klan," and one published by William Garrott Brown in The Atlantic *Monthly* of May, 1901, with the title "The Ku Klux Movement," have been especially helpful, and quotations from both have been freely indulged in in several instances.

In order to understand the remarkable conditions existing when the order sprang into being, it is necessary to glance at national legislation and policy between 1865 and 1872.

Perhaps the greatest misfortune which could have befallen the South was the assassination of Abraham Lincoln; he was not only a great man, but he was a kind and generous man, who, throughout the war, looked upon the South as an erring child to be brought back, forcibly in necessary, into its father's house, and in dealing with the great problems immediately following the war he would have acted with "charity for all, with malice towards none,"

Perhaps the second greatest misfortune which could have befallen the South was the succession of Andrew Johnson to the presidency. With the single exception of Aaron Burr, no public man of our country has suffered so much at the hands of his contemporaries as has Andrew Johnson; despised by the South as a renegade, first distrusted and finally hated by the Republicans with a venom unsurpassed in public life, he was ground between the upper and nether millstones. As a matter of fact, honesty and consistency marked his remarkable political career, but no man was ever more brutal or less diplomatic in dealing with delicate situations or endowed with such a faculty for doing the right thing in the wrong way.

It hardly admits of question but that Johnson adopted, *en toto,* the plan Mr. Lincoln had mapped out for dealing with the Southern States, involving the immediate organization of the State governments and their representation in both Houses of Congress.

The details of the plan included the appointment of a provisional governor by the President in each State , and the calling of a Constitutional Convention with delegates selected by those who were qualified voters under the old laws and would take the oath of allegiance prescribed by the Amnesty proclamation; it was also Mr. Lincoln's plan to admit as voters such Negroes as could read and write and had served in the Union army.

When Congress met in December, 1865, the Southern States had carried out the design of the President.

It must be borne in mind that throughout the war and up to this time the North and the Republican party had uniformly contended that the Southern States had never been out of the Union, that the Union and the States were indestructible, and that there was no way by which any of them could get out/ this had been announced in various resolutions of Congress and proclamations of Mr. Lincoln, and was in fact the only theory on which the position of the Union in the war between the States could be sustained.

Immediately on the collapse of the Confederacy the views of the leaders of the Republican party underwent a startling change; Thaddeaus Stevens, as leader in the House, and Wade and Sumner in the Senate began to preach the doctrine that *the Southern States had become conquered provinces, that all Federal laws and guarantees of the Constitution of the United States were suspended within their limits, and that Congress alone could restore the laws and rights so suspended.* If the Southern States were still States of the Union, then their citizens were entitled to all the guarantees of the Federal Constitution; if they were no longer States, then a successful war waged to preserve the Union had resulted in its dissolution.

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the motives that inspired these men. It is to be noted, however, that at the very time the dominant party in Congress was denying the existence of these States as such, the Supreme Court of the United States was recognized their existence by trying cases brought by and against them as States, the justices of the court were sitting on Circuit in these States, which was permissible only in the event tat they were States, and their votes as States had just been considered and counted in the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment, which otherwise could not have been adopted, as the Southern States constituted over one-fourth of those in the Union.

The personal and political strength of Mr. Lincoln, coupled with the fact that he was one of the original leaders and organizers of the Republican party, might have enabled him to succeed where Johnson failed. Andrew Johnson was never a Republican, but a States Rights Union Democrat, and in 1864 was placed on the Republican ticket as a sop to the War Democrats of the North and to strengthen the administration in the border States.

The North had hardly recovered from the first sensation of horror over the assassination of Mr. Lincoln and corresponding bitterness towards the South, before President Johnson announced his policy, and the long contest between the Executive and Legislative Departments of the National Government began.

The first open rupture occurred in February, 1866, when the President vetoed what is known as the *"Freedmen's Bureau Bill,"* which was passed in a slightly different shape over his second veto on July 16th of the same year.

The bill established a bureau, to be a part of the War Department, which was to have jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to freedmen; it provided for agents to be appointed from the army, or civil life, in all counties of the South, who were to exercise the powers of military judges; among other vague and indefinite provisions it contained the following:

> The President shall, through the commissioner and the officers of the bureau, and under such rules and regulations as the President, through the Secretary of War, shall prescribe, extend military protection and have military jurisdiction over all cases and questions concerning the free enjoyment of such immunities and rights" as are guaranteed to freedmen by the terms of the bill; these agents likewise exercised jurisdiction over all matters of contract between Negroes and white men.
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> In trials before them, the ordinary rules of law governing procedure were abolished, the right of trial by jury was denied, no presentment or indictment was required, the punishments were not fixed by law, but were such as the different agents might deem proper and adequate, and from these remarkable tribunals no appeal lay to any of the courts vested by the Constitution of the United States with the exclusive judicial powers of the Nation.

> Last, but not least, a detail of troops was at the beck and call of each agent to enable him to enforce his extraordinary jurisdiction. Although the Constitution of the United States provides that every State shall have at least on representative in Congress and that no State, without its consent, shall be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate, not a single member of either House of Congress from any of the States affected by this bill was recognized or allowed to participate in the proceedings of Congress when it was being passed, although, under proclamation of the President, their State governments had been duly organized and their elected representatives were at Washington demanding their seats.

At this day it will not be seriously contended that this legislation was warranted as a war measure, for the war had been over for more than a year, and the authority of the United States was not being questioned in any portion of the South.

In the spring and summer of 1867 Congress passed, over the President's veto, three bills providing for "the more efficient government of the rebel States."

These bills divided ten of the Southern States into five military districts, each to be ruled over by an army officer not below the rank of brigadier general; his duties and authority were "to protect all persons in their rights of person and property; to suppress insurrection, disorder, and violence, and to punish, or cause to be punished, all disturbers of the public peace and criminals"; one provision declared all interference by State authority void; another provided that the military commander might "allow local civil tribunals to try offenders," but left it to his discretion whether he should do so or not; another gave the commander the power to suspend or remove from office, or from the performance of official duties, all civil or military officers of any State or municipality, and fill their places with such soldiers or civilians as he saw fit; the effect of this legislation was to abolish the trial by jury in all criminal and civil cases, to proclaim martial law and thereby suspend the writ of habeas corpus to authorize arrests without warrant, abolish indictment and presentment for crime, discard process of law, and make the citizen and his property answerable to the will or caprice of a military officer from whose decision there was no appeal, except in case of a death sentence, when the approval of the President was required; the power was also given to the military commander to delegate most of these powers to whatever subordinates he saw fit. Not only did this legislation violate almost every guarantee of the State and Federal Constitutions, but it gave to a subordinate military officer powers which the combined legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the National Government could not exercise.

In one of his veto measures Andrew Johnson truthfully said:

> "Such a power has not been wielded by any monarch in England for more than five hundred years. In all that time no people who speak the English language have borne such servitude."

In this legislation it was also proved that the prescribed military rule was to continue until the ten States held constitutional conventions in a manner set out, elected delegates thereto under domination of the military, adopted constitutions satisfactory to Congress, had their Legislatures adopt the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and until said amendment had been adopted by three-fourths of the States of the entire Union.

When it is added that up to 1872 all white men were disfranchised and forbidden to hold any State or Federal office who had been engaged in insurrection forgiven aid or comfort to the enemies of the United States and had previously held any State or Federal office, it will be seen how complete was the scheme of reconstruction.

The only possible excuse for the plan was that the condition of the country demanded martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and this is fully met by calling attention to the fact that the suspension of this great writ is prohibited by the Constitution except in cases of "rebellion or invasion"; no one will seriously contend that either of these conditions existed.

The Civil Rights Bill, passed several years later through the influence of Charles Summer, completed what are usually considered the reconstruction acts. Sumner is said to have been a believer in the social equality of the Negro, and for the purpose of forcing this on the South a bill was put through Congress authorizing the United States courts, by heavy penalties, to compel admission of Negroes to hotels, theaters, schools, etc., and upon juries. This last act was held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1883. A bill was also introduced by Thaddeus Stevens to confiscate the property of all persons who participated in the rebellion, but his never became a law.

The writer of this paper is willing to let these acts speak for themselves without further comment, except to quote the recent public denunciation of them by Chas. Francis Adams as "impossible and indefensible."

But, if the reconstruction laws were unconstitutional, and wrong and vicious in theory, their practical application to the situation was infinitely worse; substantially all of the intelligent class of the South were disfranchised; the Negroes, not one of whom out of every hundred could either read or write, constituted almost the entire voting population carpetbaggers from the North and scalawags from the South, composed almost exclusively of the very scum of creation, organized and controlled the Negro vote, held the more lucrative offices and began an era of corruption and plunder unheard of before in the history of America. Even Republican papers admitted the conditions.

An editorial of *The Nation*, issued March 23, 1871 says:

> We owe it to human nature to say that worse governments have seldom been seen in a civilized country. They have been largely composed of trashy whites and ignorant blacks. The great majority of the officers and

> legislators have been either wanting in knowledge or in principle, or in both."

In another leader, issued March 30th of the same year, the same paper says:

> "Nothing would satisfy the hot-headed majority in Congress but to drive these men (the Southern leaders) into private life, and hand over the government to ignorant Negroes and worthless Northern adventurers."

The Charleston *Daily Republican,* speaking of the appointed officers in South Carolina, says: *Some of them had better hammer stone in the penitentiary than hold office,"* and speaking of the elected Negro officers, it says, *"many are ignorant and degraded and altogether sold to the devil."*

Undoubtedly a few good men came South at the close of the war, but it can be truthfully said of the great mass that no Goth who followed the banner of Alaric to the sack of Rome was a more ruthless destroyer of property, or held in greater contempt the rights of a prostrate people than did the carpetbaggers who followed in the wake of the Federal armies.

A few figures will give some faint idea of the results of this saturnalia of ignorance and corruption. In Mississippi 6,4000,000 acres of land, being 20 percent of the total acreage of the State, was forfeited for taxes, the State tax for 1871 being four times as great as for 1869, that of 1873 eight times as great, and that of 1874 fourteen times as great; State, county and municipal taxes aggregated an amount equivalent to confiscation, and values for taxation were frequently placed by Negro boards of supervisors at from two to four times the actual values.

In South Carolina the taxes in 1860 amounted to $400,000, while in 1871 they amounted to $2,000,000, though the taxable values had shrunk from $490,000,000 to $184,000,000, thus making the rate of taxation almost fifteen times greater. The result was that a large part of the land was forfeited and lay waste or was parceled out among Negroes. Notwithstanding this enormous tax, the debt of the State increased from $1,000,000 in 1867 to $5,000,000 in 1868 and to $30,000,000 in 1872.

During the Same period the debt of Louisiana increased from $6,500,000 to $50,000,000.

The affairs of counties, towns and villages were in even worse condition, most of their officers being Negroes, who could neither read nor write, and "who knew none of the uses of authority except its insolence."

The utter bankruptcy of States, counties and cities and their citizens was the least of the evils which prevailed.

Thousands of Negroes left the farms and crowded into the towns and villages to live on the bounty of the government and exercise the rights of suffrage and office holding

denied to their late masters; many of them were armed and organized into militia companies, Southern white men being excluded from these bodies; the agents of the Freedmens Bureau and the judges of the courts were largely prejudiced against the native whites, and frequently profoundly ignorant, and many members of the constabulary were unable to write a return upon a writ; drunken and insolent Negroes thronged the streets, and white women were frequently subjected to the vilest insults; Federal troops were quartered in the towns and often used to enforce the malice or caprice of agents of the Freedmen's Bureau and Negroes and Northern adventurers; men and women were frequently arrested without warrant or specific charge and carried forty or fifty miles from their homes and imprisoned for indefinite periods without a hearing and finally discharged without even appearing before a judge.

Woodrow Wilson in his *History of the American People,* says:

> "The white men of the South were aroused by the very instinct of self-preservation to rid themselves, by fair means or foul, of the intolerable burden of government sustained by the votes of ignorant Negroes and conducted in the interest of adventure; governments whose incredible debts were incurred that thieves might be enriched, whose increasing loans and taxes went to no public use, but into the pockets of party managers and corrupt contractors. There was no place of open action or of Constitutional agitation, under the terms of reconstruction, for the men who were the real leaders of the Southern communities. Its restrictions shut white men of the older order out from the suffrage even. They could act only by private combination, by private means, as a force outside of the government, hostile to it, proscribed by it, of whom opposition and bitter resistance was expected, and expected with defiance."

The men of the South had seen the last hope from constituted authority dissipated; there remained "nothing less than the corruption and destruction of their society, a reign of ignorance, a regime of power basely used, " under which they and their wives and children could hope for no protection of life, liberty or property, and at this point they gathered for resistance.

Curiously enough, fate had prepared a potent weapon, and at the critical moment thrust it into the hands of these desperate and despairing men.

On Christmas eve in 1865 in the law office of Judge Thomas Jones, in the little town of Pulaski, in Southern Tennessee, near the Alabama line, six young men, all confederate veterans, concluded to organize a society of some kind; some one suggested that they call it "Kuklid," from the Greek word Kuklos, meaning a circle, and some other person present said, "Call it Ku Klux"; the word "Klan" was then added to complete the alliteration. In order to arouse public curiosity and surround the organization with an atmosphere of mystery, various devices were resorted to; the oath bound the member to absolute secrecy in regard to everything pertaining to the order, and he was prohibited from disclosing the fact that he was a Ku Klux, or giving the name of any other member,

or soliciting membership; each member was required to appear at the meetings arrayed in a long robe with a white mask and very tall hat made of white pasteboard; the meetings were held at night in the cellar of a deserted brick house standing on a hill near the town. The officers were a "Grand Cyclops," who presided at the meetings; a "Grand Maji, " who was a kind of vice-president; a "Grand Turk," or marshal, a "Grand Exchequer," who acted as treasurer, and two "Lictors, who were the outer and inner guards of the "Den." One of these "Licotrs: was stationed in front of the old ruin and another between it and town, both dressed in the hideous regalia of the order and bearing enormous spears. The only business transacted at the meetings was the initiation of new members with the most fantastic of ceremonies, and the only purpose of the order was to mystify outsiders and have fun. During the summer the membership rapidly increased, the local papers contained many references to it, and the probable objects of the movement were being generally discussed; young men from the country and neighboring counties were initiated and organized "dens" in their neighborhoods, the same mystery and secrecy being maintained. The red lights and uproar of initiations seen and heard at midnight from graveyards and haunted houses were duly reported and repeated in the Negro quarter and among whites of the lower classes with every exaggeration which ignorance and suppression could suggest. Acting on mysterious statements from gigantic shrouded figures who frequented lonely country roads a midnight, it began to be bruited abroad the the Ku Klux were the spirits of dead Confederate soldiers. Travel along the roads on which the ghostly "Lictors" stood sentinel was almost discontinued at night, and even the wisest and least imaginative persons began to wonder what it all meant.

The most remarkable characteristics of the Negro race at the present day are their vivid imagination and universal superstition; during slavery and the years following the war, for obvious reasons these characteristics were much more pronounced than now.

The Ku Klux Klan readily appealed to these people as an incation of powers of darkness, and it was soon noticed that in neighborhoods where "dens" were actively operating no Negro could be induced to budge beyond his doorsill after dark.

The rapidity with which the order spread during the winter of 1865-1866 was marvelous, and yet there was still no serious purpose behind the movement and nothing to support it beyond the enjoyment of the initiations and the baffled curiosity of the mystified public. As time went by, however, and the members began to realize the amazing influence of the unknown over the minds and actions of men, and what a power was in there hands, and saw the unexampled rapidity with which the order crossed mountains and rivers and states, they themselves began to be imbued with that the idea that some great mission awaited the movement. The discovery of such a mission was not difficult; the need of some drastic remedy for existing conditions was recognized by all, and the terror inspired by the Ku Klux Klan suggested that it might be utilized to protect property and suppress crime and disorder.

At this time there were probably several hundred "dens" in Middle and West Tennessee, and a number in Mississippi and Alabama, but they had no general organization, no means of communication, no supreme authority, and in fact, they had no need of such

things; the idea of using the order as patrols, or "patter rollers," and regulators seemed to spontaneously spring up over the entire region dominated by the "dens," without an consultation, or chance for consultation among the scattered local leaders, and was promptly acted on. As soon as this developed, it was deemed best to perfect a more regular organization, and in the spring of 1867 the "Grand Cyclops" of the Pulaski "den" sent out a request to all dens of which he had knowledge to send delegates to a convention to be held in Nashville; these delegates met secretly without attracting public attention, and adopted a plan of organization. The region in which the Klan operated was to be known as the "The Invisible Empire," divided into Realms," corresponding with states; each "Realm" was divided into "Dominions," corresponding with congressional districts; each "Dominion" into "provinces," corresponding with counties, and each "Province" into "Dens."

The supreme head of the order was the "Grand Wizard, " the ruler of a "Realm" was a "Grand Dragon," that of a "Dominion" a "Grand Titan," That of a "Province" a "Grand Giant," and that of a "Den" a "Grand Cyclops."

A statement of the principles of the order, not for publication, contained the following words:

"We recognize our relation to the United States Government, the supremacy of the Constitution, the Constitutional laws thereof, and the Union of the States there under."

The special objects of the order were set out as follows:

1. To protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless from the indignities, wrongs, and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal; to relieve the injured and the oppressed; to secure the suffering and unfortunate, and especially the widows and orphans of Confederate soldiers.
2. To protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and all laws passed in conformity thereto, and to protect the States and people thereof from all invasion from any source whatever.
3. To aid and assist in the execution of all Constitutional laws, and to protect the people from unlawful seizure, and from trial, except by their peers, in conformity with the laws of the land."

The secret Nashville convention gave a still greater impetus to the movement, for the same unbearable conditions existed in almost every Southern community, and the belief that nothing could be hoped for from national or local authorities was prevalent and well founded. In order to more effectively carry out their plans, and deceive the public as to their members, the "Grand Dragon" of the "Realm" of Tennessee issued an order for a general parade in each county seat on the night of July 4, 1867. A faint idea of the impression created can be gathered from the account of an eye-witness of what occurred in Pulaski.

On the morning of that day the citizens found the sidewalks thickly strews with slips of paper bearing the printed words: "The Ku Klux will parade the streets tonight." This announcement created great excitement. The people supposed that their curiosity, so long baffled, would now be gratified. They were confident that this parade would at least afford them the opportunity of learning who belonged to the Ku Klux Klan.

Many came from the surrounding country. The members of the Klan in the county left their homes in the afternoon, and traveled alone or in squads of two or three, with their parapher"Soon after nightfall the streets were lined with an expectant and excited throng of people. nalia carefully concealed. If questioned, they answered that they were going to Pulaski to see the Ku Klux parade. After nightfall they assembled at designated points near the four main roads leading into the town. Here they donned their robes and disguises, and put covers of gaudy materials on their horses. A skyrocket sent up from a point in the town was the signal to mount and move. The different companies met and joined each other on the public square in perfect silence; the discipline appeared to be admirable. Not a word was spoken. Necessary orders were given by means of whistles. In single file, in deathlike stillness, with funeral slowness, they marched and countermarched throughout the town. While the column was headed north on one street it was going south on another. By crossing over in opposite directions the lines were kept up in almost unbroken continuity. The effect was to create the impression of vast numbers. This marching and countermarching was kept up for about 2 hours, and the Klan departed as noiselessly as they came The public was more than ever mystified. The efforts of the most curious to find out who were Ku Klux failed. One gentleman from the country was confident that he could identify the riders by the horses, but, as we have said the horses were disguised as well as the riders. Determined not to be baffled, during a halt of the column he lifted the cover of a horse that was near him and recognized his own steed and saddle, on which he had ridden into town. The town people were on the alert to see who of the young men of the town would be Ku Klux. All of them, almost without exception, were marked mingling freely and conspicuously with the spectators.

Perhaps the greatest illusion produced was in regard to the numbers taking part in the parade. Reputable citizens were confident that the number was not less than three thousand. Others, whose imaginations were more easily wrought upon, were quite certain there were ten thousand. The truth is that the number of Ku Klux in the parade did not exceed four hundred. *(Eye-witness account)*

It is safe to say that 90 percent of the work of the Klan involved no personal violence. In most instances mere knowledge of the fact that the Ku Klux were organized in the community and patrolled it by night accomplished most that was desired; in case the

nocturnal political meetings of the Negroes, organized by the scalawags and carpetbaggers, proved disorderly and offensive, sheeted horsemen would be found drawn up across every road leading from the meting place, and, though not a word was spoken, and no violence whatever offered, that meeting usually adjourned; sometimes the entire Klan was divided into smaller bodies, which rode all night , appearing in Negro quarters distributed over a large section of country, and usually maintain absolute silence and troubling no one. In case a Negro became insolent or dangerous, he was likely to be visited by a mounted specter some twelve feet high, who asked for water, drank a bucket full with the remark that it was the first he had tasted since he was killed at the battle of Shiloh, extended a skeleton hand, or what appeared to be his skull, to his unwilling host, and departed with the suggestion that he would call again in case the owner of the cabin did not improve his manners. No one who was not raised among Negroes can form the slightest conception of the potency of these methods.

In dealing with objectionable characters among the whites, mysterious communications, sealed with skull and crossbones, were usually pinned upon their doors at night, warning them to mend their ways or leave the country. In many instances all the officers of a county were notified that it was time for them to depart, and they did so with no unnecessary delay.

There lives in the capital City of Texas an honorable member of our profession, who has held for many years one of the highest positions within the gift of the state, who organized every "Den" in the state of Florida. I have his word for it that not one single act of personal violence was committed by any one of these "Dens." Their most noteworthy achievement was the destruction of the entire shipment of guns sent from the North to arm the Negro militia of the State. Every telegraph operator, brakeman, engineer and conductor on the road over which these arms entered the State was a Ku Klux; the shipment was watched at every point, and between Lake City and Madison, Florida, the entire two carloads of guns were thrown from the moving train by night by a select band of Ku Klux under the personal command of this gentleman, who had quietly boarded the train at the last stop. The Ku Klux left the train at the next station and destroyed the shipment before it was missed, and this notwithstanding the fact that two coaches filled with United States soldiers, sent to guard the arms, were attached to the same train. I am informed by one who participated in the movement that when the 1500 stand of arms intended for the Negro militia of Arkansas left Memphis on the steamer "Hesper", it was overtaken by a tug and the entire shipment broken and thrown into the river.

The men who committed these acts may be condemned by some as lawless, but the destruction of tea in Boston Harbor by comparison becomes rank piracy.

But masked riders and mystery were not the only Ku Klux devices; carpetbaggers and scalawags and their families were ostracized in all walks of life; in the church, in the school, in business wherever men or women, or even children gathered together, no matter what the purpose or the place, the alien and the renegade, and all that belonged or pertained to them, were refused recognition and consigned to outer darkness and the companionship of Negroes.

In addition to these methods there were some of a much more drastic nature; the sheeted horsemen did not merely warn and intimidate, especially when the warnings were not heeded. In many instances Negroes and carpetbaggers were whipped, and in rare instances shot or hung. Notice to leave the country was frequently extended and rarely declined, and , if declined, the results were likely to be serious. Hanging was promptly administered to the house burner, and sometimes to the murderer; the defamer of women of good character was usually whipped, and sometimes executed if the offense was repeated; threats of violence and oppression of the weak and defenseless, if persisted in after due warning, met with drastic and sometimes cruel remedies; mere corruption in public office was too universal for punishment, or even comment, but he who prostituted officilial power to oppress the individual, a crime prevalent from one end of the country to the other, especially in cases where it affected the widow and the orphan, was likely to be dealt with in no gently way, in case a warning was not promptly observed; those who advocated and practiced social equality of the races and incited hostility of the blacks against the whites were given a single notice to depart in haste, and they rarely took time to reply.

I have in my possession a letter recently received from one who in his young manhood was one of the advisers and leaders of the Klan in East Mississippi, and who subsequently for years served his State with distinction in the National Congress. I quote this language of his, worthy of all acceptation:

> "No Victim of their displeasure never suffered without first a full and ample investigation of his case, ex pâté, 'tis true, but all the facts were first found out and thoughtfully weighed, for and against him, and the sentence carefully considered and made commensurate with the justice and necessity of the case. They made the punishment suit the crime."

Where good men controlled little real injustice was done, but in many instances "Dens" were dominated by the reckless and the cruel. These men committed crimes equal to, or worse than those the movement was intended to suppress, and ultimately brought the greatest reproach upon the order. The writer, after going over a very large amount of data, include a hurried perusal of some thirteen volumes devoted by the committees of Congress to the subject, has become fully convinced that in a vast majority of cases the victims of the Ku Klux Klan received just about what they were entitled to.

On account of the secret character of the Klan, it was impossible for it to defend itself against many false accusations. Violence and crimes with which it had no connection were constantly charged to it, and it is well known that many arrests were made of lawless persons clothed in the Ku Klux disguise, who did have, and could have had no connection whatever with the order.

But the Invisible Empire, however its sway was exercised, was a real empire. Wisely and humanely, or roughly and cruelly, the work was done. the State governments, under carpetbag control, made little headway with their freedmen's/ militia against the silent representatives of the white man's will." Acts of Congress and proclamations of President

Grant, backed by the army of the Nation, were not sufficient to meet the desperate onset of men who, armed with crude weapons, were making what seemed to them the last stand for all they held sacred. Time is not allowed to review the history of the order in the different States; in some it lasted much longer than in others, because the conditions it was intended to remedy lasted longer.

In September, 1868, Cover nor Brlownlow called the Legislature of Tennessee together and had an at passed comparable only to the reconstruction acts of Congress. By its terms association or connection with the Klan was punished by a fine of $500 and imprisonment in the penitentiary for not less than five years; every inhabitant of the state was constituted an officer with power to arrest without process anyone known to be, or suspected of being, a Ku Klux; to feed, lodge, entertain or conceal a ku Klux subjected the offender to a fine of k$500 and imprisonment for five years, and informers were offered one-half of the fine.

Notwithstanding these drastic provisions, the Ku Klux continued to actively operate in Tennessee for about six months thereafter. In the latter part of February, 1869, the "Grand Wizard," a citizen of Tennessee, issue a proclamation to his subjects, reciting the legislation against the Klan, stating that the order had now largely accomplished the purposes for which it had been organized; that the civil law now afforded adequate protection to life and property; that robbery and lawlessness were longer unrebuked; that the better elements of society were no longer in dread for the safety of their property, persons and families; that the "Grand Wizard" had been invested with power to determine questions of paramount importance, and , in the exercise of the power so conferred, he declared the Klan dissolved and disbanded. It is believed that "Grand Wizard" was no less a personage than Nathan Bedford Forrest. As the possessor of dauntless and sustained courage, resourcefulness and a grim disregard of all consequences, no more ideal leader of such a movement ever appeared upon the American Stage. This proclamation was addressed to all "Realms," "Dominions," "Provinces" and "Dens" of the "Empire," but it had little effect beyond the borders of one State. Tennessee was the first Southern State in which constitutional government was restored and the scheme of reconstruction abounded. the writer is satisfied that as late as 1872 the Klan was a potent factor in other States.

As a general rule, this grim protest against unbearable conditions disappeared with the worst of the conditions, and not sooner.

In 1870, 1871, and 1872 the Ku Klux Klan consumed a large part of the attention of Congress, the President, and the army of the United States; investigating committees visited every section of the South, many volumes of testimony were compiled, hundreds of speeches were made, martial law was declared in some instances, and proclamations issued in others, still more drastic laws were passed; but in the face of all this, the movement relentlessly moved on to the accomplishment of its purposes.

The Senate investigating committee and the joint committee of the Houses of Congress each presented majority and minority reports; the first to the effect that a conspiracy

existed in the South, of a political nature, against law and the Negro; the second, that misgovernment and criminal exploiting of the country by the reconstruction leaders had provoked natural resistance.

The great debates in Congress and the press of the country began to educate the people as to the awful conditions which had prevailed, and the revolution resorted to as a remedy.

In 1872 Congress passed an act restoring the right vote and hold office to the real leaders and capable men of the South, the worst conditions had disappeared, he troops had been withdrawn, and what was known in the North as "The Great Ku Klux Conspiracy" was at an end.

Just how much the acts of Congress and of the President had to do with the disappearance of the order it is hard to say, but the scalawag and the carpetbagger disappeared about the same time, and it might be said that the purposes of the Klan had been substantially accomplished. The belief of most people in the North that the movement was organized and controlled by roughs and criminals associated together for the commission of crime and bent on re-enslaving the Negro and driving has Northern protectors from the South, is not sustained by the facts. The men who engaged in this movement were largely of the very best.

The leading editorial in *The Nation* of March 30, 1871, speaking of the ignorance and corruption of the carpetbag regime, says:

"We might be told that phenomena like these may be witnessed in New York, which is true. But in New York no one is disfranchised, and we may add that, were decent people in new York hot-blooded, like the same class in South Carolina, and did they believe, as the South Carolinians do, that Ku Kluxing would work reform, they would be busy at it day and night, andy many a hardened ruffian would be yelling for Federal troops to save him from the consequences of his villiany. We say deliberately, too, that we believe a community which sits down, as we do, under some of the evils from which we here suffer and of which we hear every day is doubtless wiser than the South Carolinians, but it is very doubtful whether it is healthier in spirit. We seek neither to defend nor palliate Ku Kluxs, but we can not allow the persons who sow the seeds from which Ku Kluxery naturally springs to throw the whole blame on the men who engage in it."

Speaking of the typical Southern man of that day, Daniel H. Chamberlain, the reconstruction ruler of South Carolina, said: "I consider him a distinct and really noble growth of our American soil. For, if fortitude under good and under evil fortune, if endurance without complaint of what comes in the tide of human affairs, if a grim clinging to ideals once charming, if vigor and resiliency of character and spirit under defeat and poverty and distress, if a steady love of learning and letters when libraries were lost in flames and the wreckage of war, if self-restraint when the long -delayed relief at last came; if, I say, all these qualities are parts of real heroism, if these qualities can vivify and ennoble a man or a people, then our own South may lay claim to an honored place among the differing types of our great common race."

Such was the matured judgment of the Massachusetts Governor of South Carolina during the reconstruction period in regard to the class of men who organized and chiefly dominated the Ku Klux Klan, and there is nothing I would wish to add to it.

Did the end aimed at and accomplished by the Ku Klux Klan justify the movement? The opinion of the writer is that the movement was fully justified, though he, of course, does not approve of crimes and excesses incident to it.

The abuses under which the American colonies of England revolted in 1776 were mere child's play compared to those borne by the south during the period of reconstruction, and the success of the later movement as a justification of a resort to revolutionary methods was as pronounced as that of the former.

Whatever may be your views, I leave the question with you, repeating the proposition with which I began, that, amid conditions as they existed in the South from 1866 to 1872, scarcely a man in this audience would have been other than a Ku Klux or a Ku Klux sympathizer.

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